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AUTHOR Cusack, Brian O.
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ABSTRACT

The New Zealand education structures were reorganized on a national scale in the late 1980s. In 18 months, a 100-year-old education system was radically restructured to create new administrative structures, new career paths, and new professional expectations for personnel. This paper summarizes these structural changes, reviews research reports characterizing the nature of professional change for educational administrators and managers, discusses emerging issues, and elaborates a framework for professional values. Restructuring was achieved by central agency retention of policy controls and by devolution of institutional responsibility as close as possible to the communities and people served. Structural change led to changes in the nature and control of professional activity. Principals overwhelmingly approved these changes, but found them fast, chaotic, traumatic, and exhausting. The employee relationship changed as all school principals went into contracts, the board of trustees became the employing authority, and the "hands-off" style of leadership emerged. Two contentious issues, managerialism versus professionalism and instructional leadership versus credentialism, are discussed, along with a new values framework for principals requiring public accountability, community involvement, longer work hours, instrumental control, and entrepreneurial management skills. It is uncertain whether the changes will genuinely improve children's educational experience. (Contains 18 references.) (MLH)

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"AN EDUCATION PROFESSION FOR TOMORROW"

MP6 Structural change, professional change: the New Zealand school
principal

BRIAN O. CUSACK

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND, AUSTRALIA

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A Paper Prepared for the British Educational Management and Administration Society Conference,
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Structural Change, Professional Change: The New Zealand School Principal

Brian O. Cusack

DAHAES, University of New England, NSW 2531, Australia
Treasurer, National Council, New Zealand Educational Administration Society
Correspondence: FAX 64-9-6364465

Summary of Content

New Zealand education administration structures were reorganised on a national scale in the late 1980s. The changes were in keeping with other similar initiatives by national and state governments across the world. One consequence of structural change was change in the control of professional activity. In this paper the structural changes to the administration of New Zealand education are summarised, a selection of research reports are reviewed to characterise the nature of professional change for educational administrators and managers, some of the issues arising are discussed, and a framework for professional values is elaborated.

The contentious issues of managerialism versus professionalism, and instructional leadership versus credentialism, are discussed in the general context of change to identify two edges in the on-going reform of New Zealand education. The general outcomes from these debates has concerned the control and regulation of professional activity. The education profession of tomorrow depends very much on the resolution of these issues today.

Introduction

During the 1980s Governments around the world chose to reposition the interest in education as a function of the economic management of state. The immediate consequence for education was structural change and a down-stream effect has been change in the control of professional activity. Commentators have noted the apparent similarity of events, outcomes and problems in different education systems. For example;

Beare reflected that:

Structural change has become the common feature in schools and school systems around the world in the 1980s, especially in many Western Countries (Beare 1989).

Taylor observed:

That there are essential similarities in the ways which we organise and manage education ... [there is an] essential sameness, the world over, of the activity we call educational administration (Taylor, 1991).

And Thody reported from experiences in a number of Commonwealth countries that:

There were differences, of course, but the extent of the similarities caused me to reflect that it may be more than just cricket which keeps the Commonwealth together (Thody, 1991).

Possibly, then, some of the issues arising from structural change in New Zealand education may be of more general interest.

Structural Change

The restructuring of New Zealand education administration was popularly called the "earthquake model". In 18 months an education system of over 100 years standing was radically restructured to create new administrative structures, new career paths and new professional expectations for personnel. The restructuring was achieved by the retention of policy controls at the centre by agencies, and by devolving responsibility for the institution's well-being as close as possible to the communities and people of the institution. A key to understanding the moves was the notion of "re-balancing powers".

In practice, this meant the elimination of middle management agencies and the transfer of full powers for school governance to the "Boards of Trustees". Parents were to have a greater say in the education of their children. Legal arrangements in the form of "charters" and "contracts" formalised the links between the policy makers, the Trustees of the institution, and the institution's professional personnel. After 1 October 1989 the administrative structures in New Zealand Education were consequently designed to give:

- maximum choice at institution level for resource management;
- objectivity and simplicity for policy analysis at systems level; and,
- trustworthy advice to the Minister of Education at the centre.

The radical nature of the changes were based on a perception that the historical education system was "creaky" and "cumbersome" (Picot, 1988:22), and that allegedly five serious weaknesses needed urgent attention. The five points of concern were namely:

- the decision making structure;
- the diversity of governance structures for institutions;
- the alleged unavailability of systems control information;
- the quality of management practices; and,
- expressed feelings of powerlessness, (Picot, 1988:22).

These concerns ran to the core of government funded education, and consequently the implementation of the reform principles brought change to all education sectors.

One important aspect of the reform was the usage of language. Many terms were specific to the New Zealand (NZ) context but referred to comparatively similar structures in other education systems. For example, "School Trustees" performed comparatively similar functions in NZ as "School Governors" did in the UK. The "School Charter" in NZ was a legal undertaking between the School Trustees and the Minister of Education for property, educational and fiscal outcomes. In the UK "The Parent's Charter" (1991) and the "School Governors: A Guide to the Law" (1988 and updates) handbook defined similar administrative functions. At the risk of a further blurring of differences between the respective education systems, Woodhouse's summation of "Devolution in the U.K." provides a comparative basis for parallel events in the reform of NZ education administration (Refer Figure 1.).

The radical nature of restructuring in NZ education was illustrated by comparing the old order with the new (Refer Figure 2.). The historical administration of NZ education was structured around an overarching Department of Education, a number of middle management agencies and plural governance structures for institutions. In effect the configuration had a tightly regulated centre and diversity in the periphery. In contrast, however, the new education administrative structures had plural central agencies, no middle management agencies and unified governance structures for institutions (Refer Figure 3.).

The new structures were designed to re-balance powers in education, that, for example:

- providers of services were separated from the evaluators of performance;
- employers were separated from employees; and,
- the control of education was devolved to a variety of mutually exclusive professional and non-professional interest groups.

The enormity of these structural changes had profound implications for the control of professional activity. The following illustrations focus on the changes for school principals.

Changes in Professional Activity

A direct consequence of structural change was change in the nature and control of professional activity. The following brief summary of outcomes illustrate characteristic changes to professional conduct in one education sector. [Further elaboration may be found in Codd 1990;1991; Cusack 1991;1992a;1992b; Mitchell 1991; Ramsay 1991;1992; Wylie 1990;1991;1992. Unreferenced quotes below: Cusack, 1988-1991]

The nature of change for school principals was:

fast:

I think the haste and the waste have been a negative influence on a good idea. Too much too soon without attention to working detail (Wylie, 1990:65).

chaotic:

Some of this is madness. We are told one thing and then they [allegedly the Implementation Unit] change their minds only to revert to something different again. Things have to improve. Many babies have gone out with the bath water.

traumatic:

The tensions and stresses are telling. My perception of role is changing. I'm running today's school and "Tomorrow's School", and it's hot in the office. There is pressure on principals. Charters and policies are no problem but what comes over the desk ... the paper war from the Implementation Unit takes the time.

exhausting:

There is real pressure in a small community which has few specialists and the personal contact is great. I'm out of the classroom one day per week but all my energy is going into administration. It's long hours so there is less time for class preparation. The reading ... the paper war takes time. I work from 8am to 11pm at the moment. I get up at 6.45am and need an hour at night to unwind. My peers look jaded, drawn, stressed, gaunt and grey. I'm probably the same.

School principals in interviews acknowledged their changing professional roles.

Professionalism hinges on the job description and the performance agreement. There is a change from curriculum development to the broad spectrum. The principal is in the classroom less. I'm doing policy development, implementation and developing my own expertise. My concern is with community sponsorship, market planning, public relations, strategic plans ...

The central functions are now in the principal's office. It's a public relations with the community, business associates, school parents and so on. I have to sell the school for what it is. Professional and instructional leadership are delegated. For example teacher accountability, appraisal and so on. ... A lot more people want to influence events. The teacher is more responsible and we see more of parents ... that's good for professionals. Schools have always had high achievement from limited resources but the principal is going to have to measure up to a written list of criteria they are doing already without any fuss.

Professional change included an increased number of non-negotiable hours of professional activity (Refer to Figure 4.).

Wylie concluded that:

The school work load stemming from the Tomorrow's Schools changes is, and will continue to be, much higher and more demanding than under the previous system. It has a of core demands which are largely involuntary, which boards can only modify to suit themselves, rather than ignore. The content of the workload at schools exemplifies the new bureaucratic and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills which many principals and trustees have exercised, embellished, learned or confronted over the last 30 months; it also demonstrates the desire for practical results, involvement, and a companionable partnership (Wylie, 1992).

The control of professional activity also changed (Refer to Figure 5.).

- the employee relationship changed - all school principals went onto employment contracts. Secondary school principals went onto individual contracts;
- the employer came closer - the school Board of Trustees became the employing authority. No further regional employing authorities; and,
- new instrumental conditions for leadership - the "hands-off" style.

Controversial Issues 1: Managerialism and Professionalism

New Zealand school principals had traditionally received little or no training to become school administrators and managers. Principals were trained as teachers, practised as teachers and became principals after lengthy teaching service.

Braun noted:

... New Zealand principals view their role through the eyes of a teacher, rather than an administrator. Few would be in the position of the principal of Beverly Hills High School who admitted curriculum was his "weak area". That New Zealand principals view themselves as teachers first and foremost affects the way in which they do their job as principal and the relationships they have with teaching staff, whom they tend to regard as professional colleagues rather than subordinates ("Principals Today", 1992:19).

The reform of education administration imposed on schools a different style of management. Secondary school principals, for example, were separated from collegial relationships with School inspectors and with senior staff, and required to "manage" the day-to-day running of a school. All school principals were required to take on many non-curriculum - managerial - tasks. Such changes brought into question the quality of education being afforded to students.

Codd for example argued:

If it [managerialism] is imposed upon schools, it is a culture that tends to be undemocratic, uneducational and wasteful for human initiative and capacity (Codd, 1990).

Ramsay in a 10,000 hour field study of the NZ education reforms concluded that:

We have no doubt that good principals must be good managers. However, above all else they must be good professionals. This research has shown conclusively that management skills alone are not sufficient for school leaders. We found that resources were required to facilitate the professional development of principals, and that regular release from managerial tasks was essential (Ramsay, 1991).

The tension between education value and economic imperative is an on-going debate in the reform of NZ education. The scope of professional activity to a large extent is determined by the delicate balance of contesting powers and the recognition afforded to educational leadership in the new managerial arrangements.

Controversial Issues 2: Instructional Leadership and Credentialism

The second phase of education reform in NZ has concerned the restructuring of qualifications and the right to award qualifications. All education sectors from the first year of schooling to Bachelors level in tertiary education have been effected. NZ schools have a National curriculum and this is to be retained. However, the delivery of curriculum is to be restructured to provide measurable learning outcomes and standardised units of study for qualification credit. Furthermore, the right to teach courses is no longer the prerogative of traditional educational organisations but that of any organisation which is accredited by the National Qualifications Authority. The major issue arising was, therefore, control over the delivery of curriculum.

The debate is yet to run its full course but the contentious points were:

- the language - "providers deliver modules" translated to mean "accredited organisations teach approved units of work";
- time requirements - fitting the modules and assessment requirements into school timetables;
- the selection of content - all studies were to fall into 13 fields of learning; and,
- changes in the status of professionals.

New Professional Values

The values framework for school principals in NZ was radically restructured in the first wave of reform which focused on structural design. The second wave of reform is current and concerns the restructuring of curriculum delivery and credential assessment for students.

The new values framework for school principals required:

- public accountability;
- responsiveness to client scrutiny;
- public reporting of school performance;
- community involvement;
- attainment of performance indicators;
- longer work hours;
- instrumental control; and,
- entrepreneurial management skills.

Research reports suggested that an increasing number of principals found the new measures of professionalism appealing.

Ramsay concluded that:

There have been a number of gains and losses under the new system. It is interesting to note that the majority of Board of Trustee members remain optimistic about the reforms and do not wish to go back to the old systems. Many principals are in favour of the changes ... well over 90% of the principals in Robertson's (1990) survey stated that they were better off now than they had been before the reforms. Indeed, one principal went as far as to say that the reforms were the best things that had happened since sliced bread (Ramsay, 1992).

In interviews school principals responded positively to the result of reform in their schools with statements such as:

- better efficiency;
- a higher level of professionalism;
- an improved focus;
- a great improvement; and,
- better delegation and sharing of work load can be achieved.

The control over funding and resources was cited by several principals as a significant factor in higher levels of professionalism.

Boards of Trustees look more closely at the strengths and weaknesses of staff when they appoint. We also look carefully at curriculum programmes to spend our money. We forward plan and budget. Inservice courses are chosen more carefully to fit the children's needs. It's an improvement. We are better focused. We have a better fit between programmes and resources.

Summary

The reform of education administration in NZ was consistent with the moves by other national and state governments around the world to devolve aspects of centralised control to institutions. Local school management strengthened the role of parents in the governance of schools and enhanced the school principal's professional profile. In the absence of middle-management agencies considerable power to control resources was devolved to schools. Many principals have commented favourably on the new measures of control but expressed disquiet at the considerably extended hours of work.

The education profession of tomorrow requires educational leadership today. The contentious issues of managerialism and professionalism, and instructional leadership and credentialism, have been exacerbated by successive waves of education reform in NZ. However, the "real job" of education may yet to be addressed.

... many of the Board members, principals and staff with whom we have contact are wanting to get on with the "real job" of education: providing the most appropriate and highest quality of classroom experiences for ... children. The jury is still out on whether the administrative reforms are conducive or antagonistic to this goal (Mitchell, 1991).

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Political Motives for Reform

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. To take power/control from the LEAs and place it in local communities. | 1. The same. |
| 2. To make schools more accountable to the community. | 2. The same. |
| 3. To move towards a market led service. | 3. The same. |

Major Control Issues

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. All schools to be formula funded. | 1. The same. |
| 2. At least 75% of the total LEA delegated budget to be based on pupil numbers with a weighting allowed for age. | 2. No middle management agencies. |
| 3. Schools to be charged the "actual" budget to be based on pupil numbers salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff. | 3. Not implemented. Trial schools. |
| 4. Schools cannot plan to overspend. | 4. The same. |
| 5. Governing Body assumes ultimate responsibility. | 5. The same. |
| 6. Governors not liable for actions carried out in "good faith". | 6. The same. |
| 7. Training required for principals and senior staff.. | 7. Employer responsibility. |
| 8. LEA role changed. | 8. Middle management agencies closed. |
| 9. Publication of unit costs of each school. | 9. Full reporting. School Reviews. |

Figure 1. Reform Comparisons

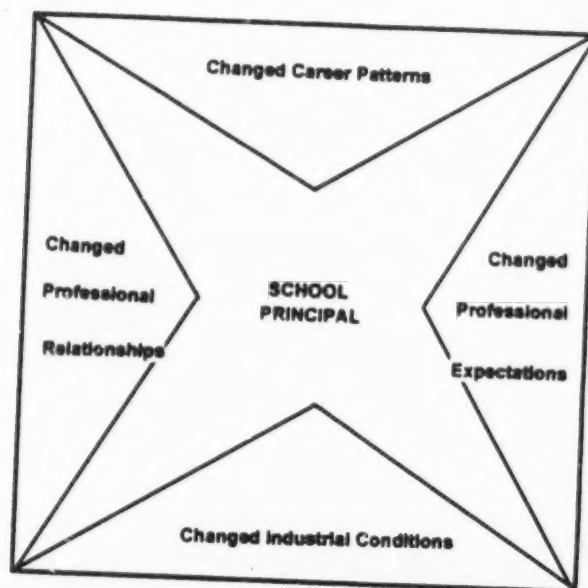


Figure 5. Antecedents to Change in Professional Activity

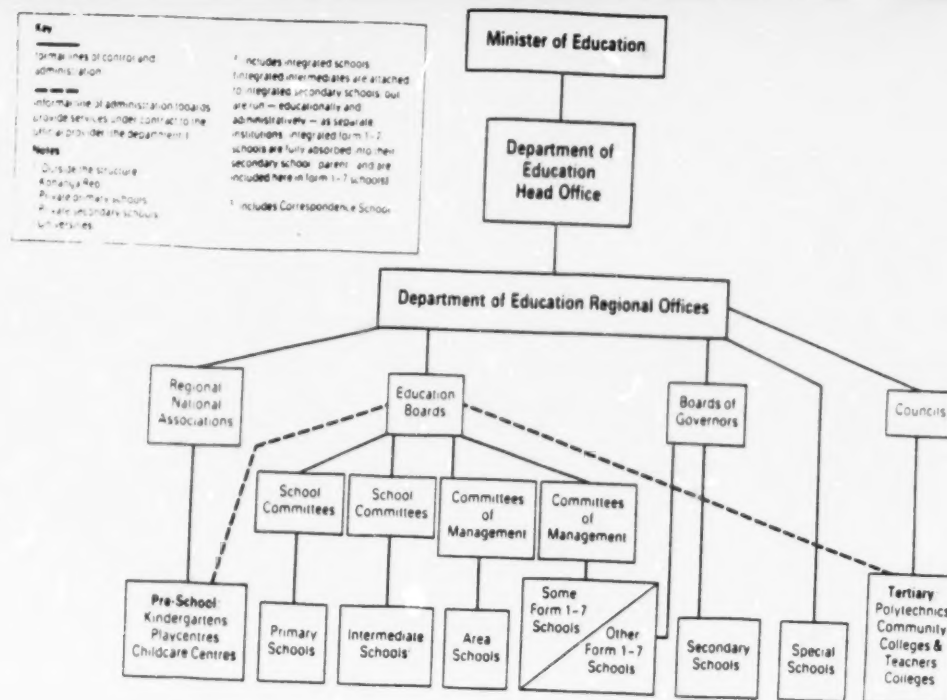


Figure 2. Old Systems Structure ("Picot Report")

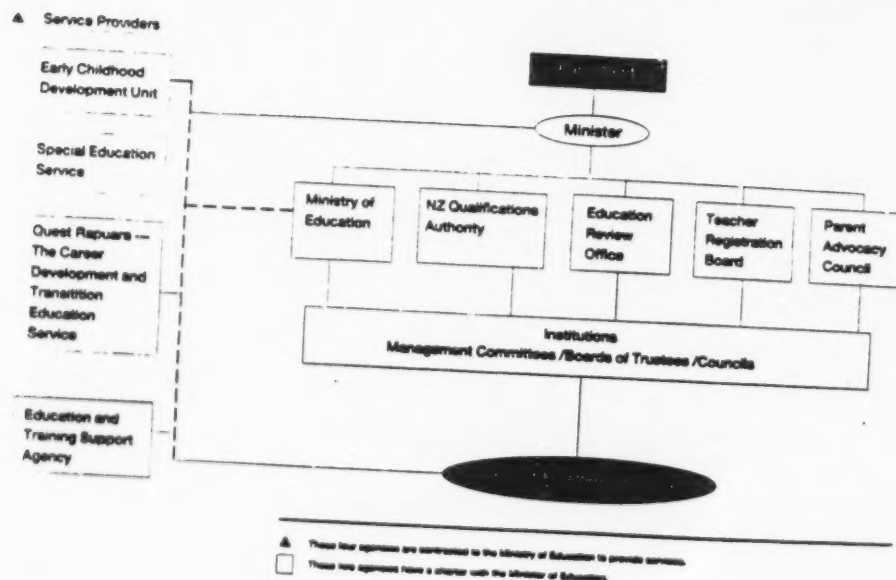


Figure 3. New Systems Structure ("The Education Family")

Hours	1989 % (N = 174)	1990 % (N = 207)	1991 % (N = 186)
41 - 50 hours	35	11	14
51 - 60 hours	39	34	47
61 - 70 hours	14	42	36
71 hours or more	4	10	4

Figure 4. Principal Hours of Work (Wyllie, 1992)